

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:250
ANSWERED ON:19.11.2007
TELECOM SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has directed private telephone companies to provide telecom services in rural areas;
- (b) if so, whether the private telephone companies are complying with the said directions;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the efforts being made by the Government to take the telecommunication revolution upto the villages in the country;
- (e) whether as many as 18,000 villages still lack telecom facilities as per the available figures; and
- (f) if so, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) All the Basic Private Service Operators (BPSOs), who were issued licence in 1997, have migrated to Unified Access Service Licence (UASL) in November 2003. According to the guidelines of UASL, there is no requirement of mandatory coverage of rural areas under the migrated UASL licence.

(b) & (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

(d) Following efforts are inter-alia being made by the Government to take telecommunication revolution upto the villages in the country:-

(i) Support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for provisioning of Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in all the 1685 net cost positive Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).

(ii) USOF support for providing Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in 66,822 undisputed accessible and inhabited villages having population more than 100 by June 2008.

(iii) Large-scale deployment of WLL network in rural areas.

(iv) Support from USOF for the innovative scheme of infrastructure by USO Fund to set up 7871 number of infrastructure sites (towers) spread over 500 districts in the country.

(e) & (f) In accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement entered with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) 66,822 remaining unconnected villages in the country are to be provided Village Public Telephones (VPTs) by November, 2007. This excludes villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forest areas/ naxalite infested areas. As on 31.08.2006, 30,251 villages have been provided with VPTs and as on 30.09.2007, a total of 50,520 VPTs have been provided. The remaining 16,302 villages are likely to be provided with VPT facility by June 2008, primarily due to delay in availability of satellite transponders which were allocated earlier on Indian Satellite, INSAT-4C.